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AUTHORITY
FABULOUS 1ST ISSUE!
VENOM
FUNERAL PYRE
FEATURING THE PUNISHER®
Tom Lyle '93

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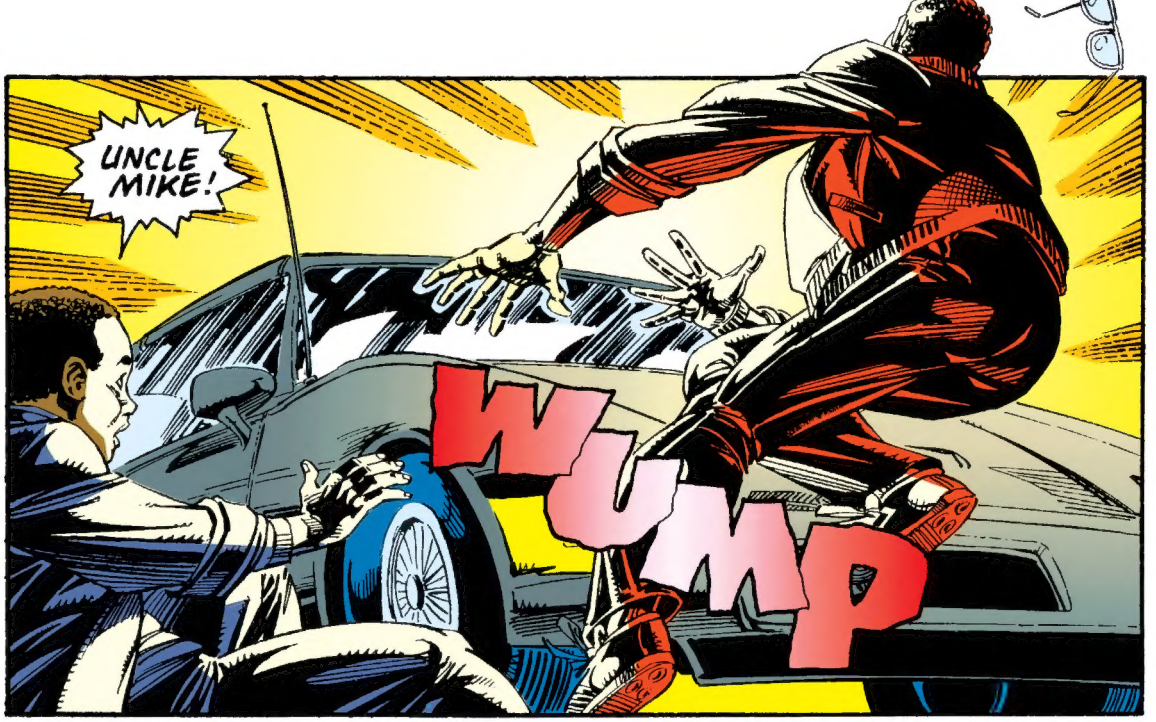
YEAH! YOU SEE THE WAY HIS HEAD WENT SPLAT WHEN JON GOT THAT LAST ONE IN?
&#$@! THE LOCALS ARE TOO FAST...
VROOM

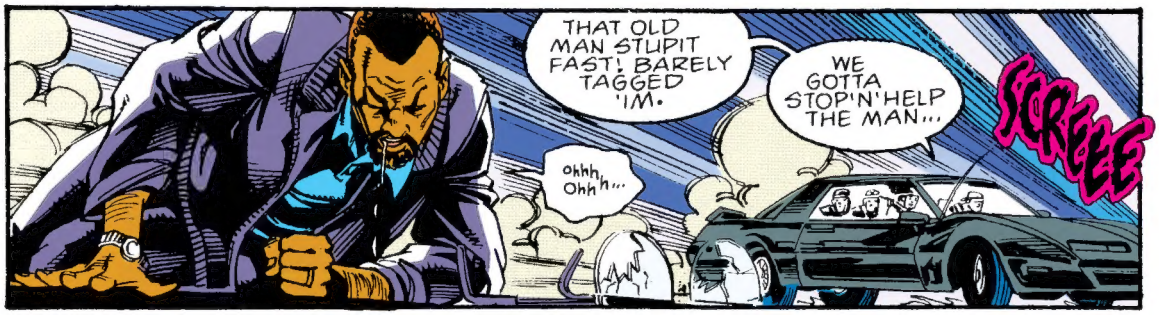
... NEED A COUPLE O' SLOWER TARGETS!
AIN'T NO ONE GONNA DITCH US OR CROSS US!
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING.

I'M BETTIN' THIS'LL CAUSE TWELVE HUNDRED IN BODY DAMAGE!
THIS BE TWO GRAND AT LEAST!

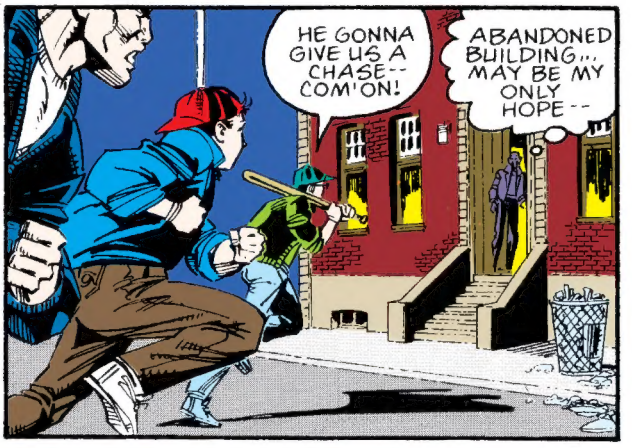
WON' MATTER. AIN'T OUR TRANS AM!

RUN, CALVIN-- RUN!


UNCLE MIKE!
WUMP

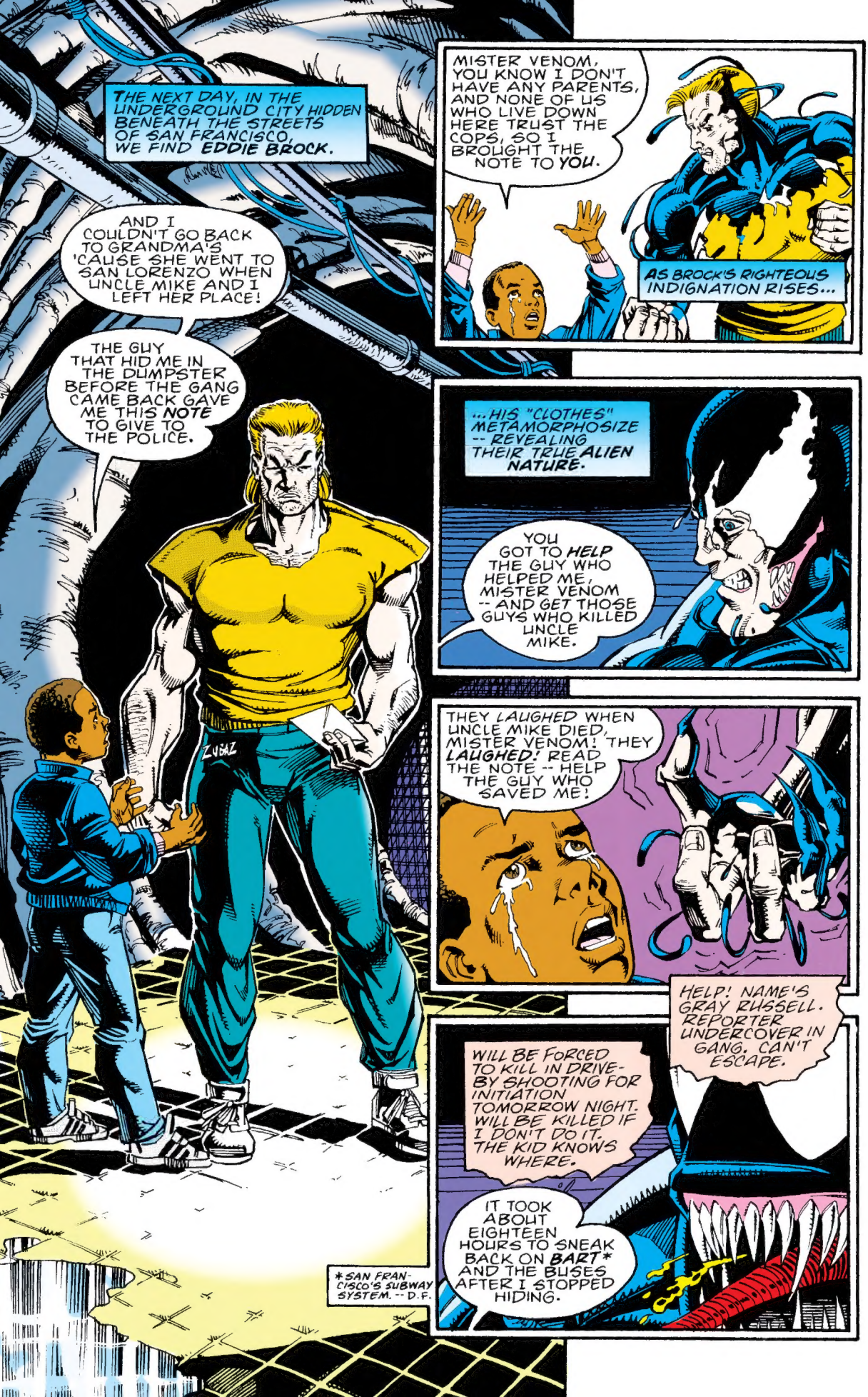

THAT OLD MAN STUPIT FAST! BARELY TAGGED 'IM.
WE GOTTA STOP'N'HELP THE MAN...
SKREEE
ohhh, Ohh'h...

PUT 'IM OUTTA HIS MISERY!
Oh LORD... GOTTA LEAD THEM AWAY FROM CALVIN!


HE GONNA GIVE US A CHASE-- COM'ON!
ABANDONED BUILDING... MAY BE MY ONLY HOPE--

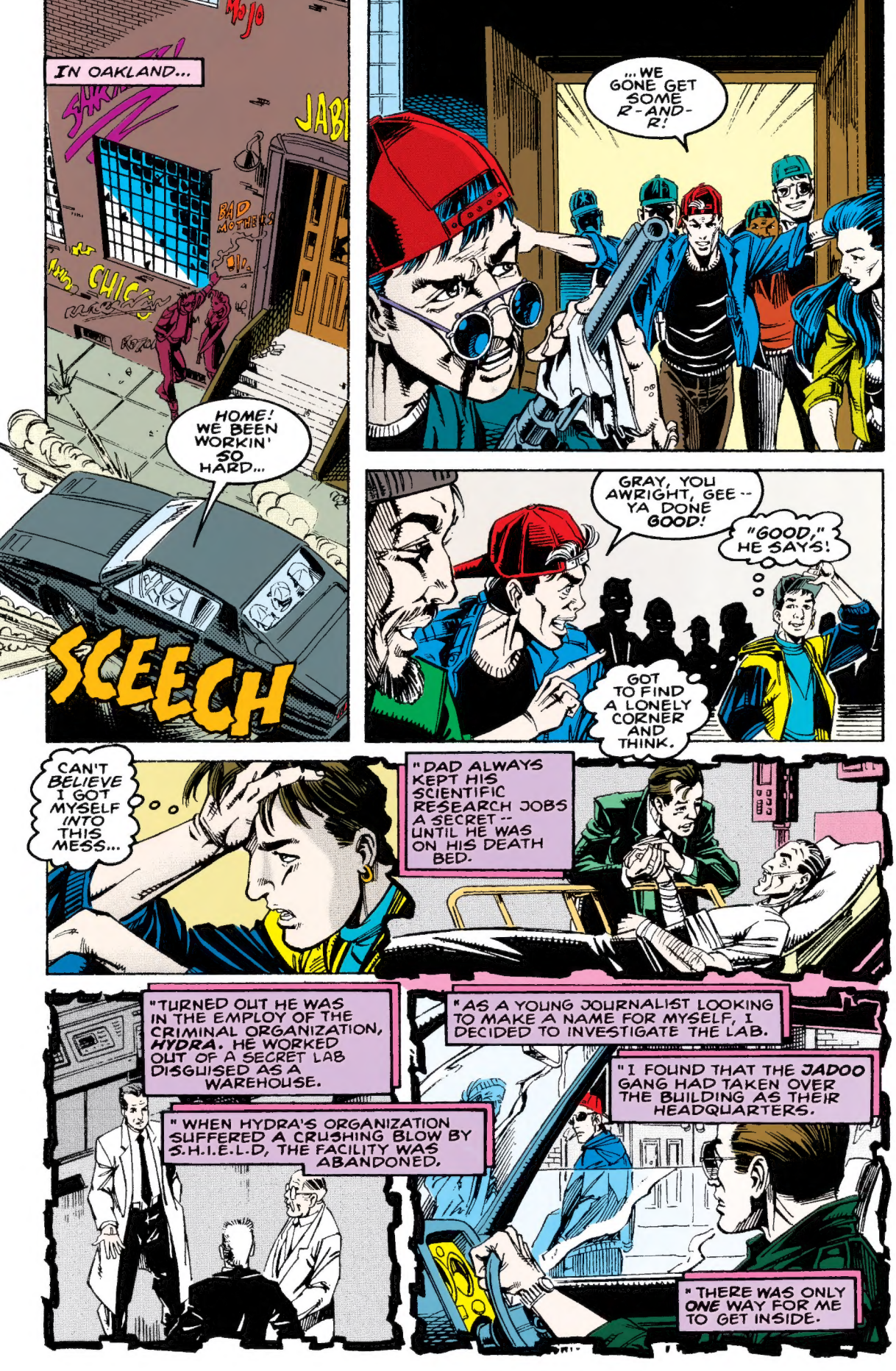
THIS IS MY CHANCE!

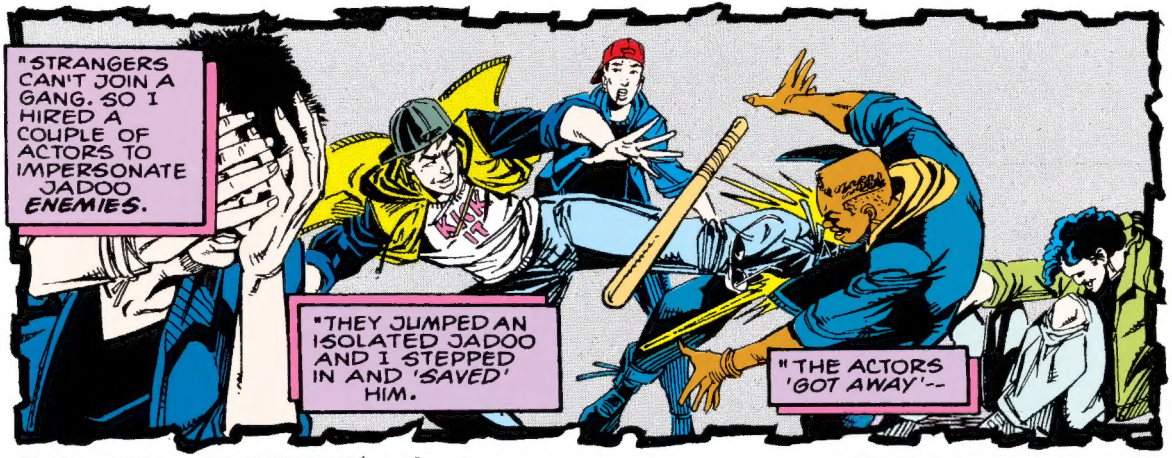
THANK YOU! THANK YOU!
VANDALIZED. GREAT.
NOW WHAT DO I DO?
TELEPHONE
ONE WAY
UP HERE! HE WENT UP HERE!
YOU $#¢∂#! HE CAN'T JUMP STAIRS WITH THAT LEG!
KID'S MORE SCARED THAN I AM!
IDIOT! HE IS UPSTAIRS! COM'ON!
DON'T HURT ME!
HOLD IT -- RELAX! I'M GOING TO HELP YOU. HIDE YOU.
GO LEFT -- WE'LL CORNER HIM ON THE ROOF!
AIIIEEEE
THUD
UNCLE MIKE?
WHOEE! WHAT A SPLAT!
CAN'T BELIEVE THAT CRIPPLE TRIED TO JUMP TO THE NEXT BUILDING!
COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO HURRY!


THE NEXT DAY, IN THE UNDERGROUND CITY HIDDEN BENEATH THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO, WE FIND EDDIE BROCK.
AND I COULDN'T GO BACK TO GRANDMA'S 'CAUSE SHE WENT TO SAN LORENZO WHEN UNCLE MIKE AND I LEFT HER PLACE!
THE GUY THAT HID ME IN THE DUMPSTER BEFORE THE GANG CAME BACK GAVE ME THIS NOTE TO GIVE TO THE POLICE.
ZUBAZ
MISTER VENOM, YOU KNOW I DON'T HAVE ANY PARENTS, AND NONE OF US WHO LIVE DOWN HERE TRUST THE COPS, SO I BROUGHT THE NOTE TO YOU.
AS BROCK'S RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION RISES...
...HIS "CLOTHES" METAMORPHOSIZE -- REVEALING THEIR TRUE ALIEN NATURE.
YOU GOT TO HELP THE GUY WHO HELPED ME, MISTER VENOM -- AND GET THOSE GUYS WHO KILLED UNCLE MIKE.
THEY LAUGHED WHEN UNCLE MIKE DIED, MISTER VENOM! THEY LAUGHED! READ THE NOTE -- HELP THE GUY WHO SAVED ME!
HELP! NAME'S GRAY RUSSELL. REPORTER UNDERCOVER IN GANG. CAN'T ESCAPE.
WILL BE FORCED TO KILL IN DRIVE-BY SHOOTING FOR INITIATION TOMORROW NIGHT. WILL BE KILLED IF I DON'T DO IT. THE KID KNOWS WHERE.
IT TOOK ABOUT EIGHTEEN HOURS TO SNEAK BACK ON BART* AND THE BUSES AFTER I STOPPED HIDING.
*SAN FRANCISCO'S SUBWAY SYSTEM. -- D.F.

I.D. ME BY LARGE BIRTHMARK ON RIGHT SIDE OF NECK. HELP NOW!
THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME TO SAVE HIM!
PLEASE, MISTER VENOM -- YOU'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!
DO NOT WORRY, CALVIN...
...WE WILL HELP.
IT IS OUR MISSION TO SAVE THE INNOCENT...
...AND DESTROY THE GUILTY.
HE'S A REPORTER INVESTIGATING UNDERCOVER IN A DANGEROUS SITUATION. ONCE WE, TOO, WERE A JOURNALIST.
THAT WAS BEFORE. BEFORE SPIDER-MAN. AND BEFORE WE FOUND EACH OTHER.
PLIP
SUCH FOND MEMORIES...
SWINGING ACROSS THE WATER UNDER THE BAY BRIDGE SHOULD GET US THERE BEFORE DARK.

AND, ON THE UPPER DECK OF THE BAY BRIDGE...
Punisher War Journal: Bridge will connect up with I-80. Take it all the way across the country to the Jersey warehouse.
Battle van came through the L.A drug ring raids without a scratch. Micro Chip will be pleasantly surprised.
Even scored some nice extra firepower.
Put on the radio to pass some time.
...GANG VIOLENCE CLAIMED SEVERAL MORE VICTIMS OVER THE NIGHT IN OAKLAND...
...INCLUDING A FIFTY-THREE YEAR OLD MAN WHO WAS RUN DOWN BY A CAR AND THEN CHASED THROUGH AN ABANDONED BUILDING. THE MAN FELL TO HIS DEATH TRYING TO FLEE HIS PURSUERS.
A YOUNG BOY WHO ACCOMPANIED THE VICTIM IS STILL MISSING.
The first of what will probably be several unscheduled detours on the way home.

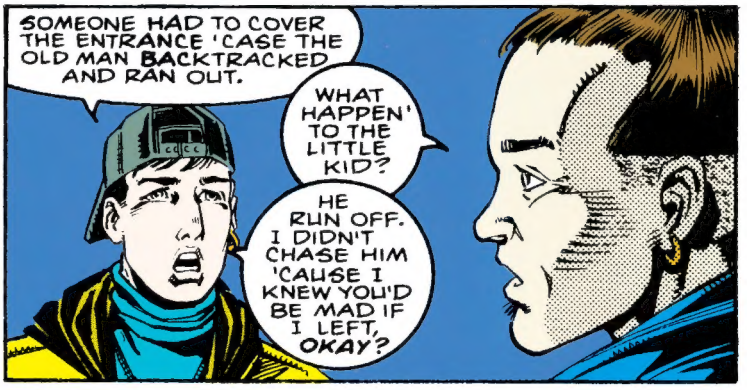

IN OAKLAND...
Mojo
BAD MOTHERS
CHIC
HOME! WE BEEN WORKIN' SO HARD...
SCEECH
...WE GONE GET SOME R-AND-R!
GRAY, YOU AWRIGHT, GEE -- YA DONE GOOD!
"GOOD," HE SAYS!
GOT TO FIND A LONELY CORNER AND THINK.
CAN'T BELIEVE I GOT MYSELF INTO THIS MESS...
"DAD ALWAYS KEPT HIS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH JOBS A SECRET -- UNTIL HE WAS ON HIS DEATH BED.
"TURNED OUT HE WAS IN THE EMPLOY OF THE CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION, HYDRA. HE WORKED OUT OF A SECRET LAB DISGUISED AS A WAREHOUSE.
"WHEN HYDRA'S ORGANIZATION SUFFERED A CRUSHING BLOW BY S.H.I.E.L.D, THE FACILITY WAS ABANDONED.
"AS A YOUNG JOURNALIST LOOKING TO MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF, I DECIDED TO INVESTIGATE THE LAB.
"I FOUND THAT THE JADOO GANG HAD TAKEN OVER THE BUILDING AS THEIR HEADQUARTERS.
"THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY FOR ME TO GET INSIDE.


"STRANGERS CAN'T JOIN A GANG. SO I HIRED A COUPLE OF ACTORS TO IMPERSONATE JADOO ENEMIES.
"THEY JUMPED AN ISOLATED JADOO AND I STEPPED IN AND 'SAVED' HIM.
"THE ACTORS 'GOT AWAY'--

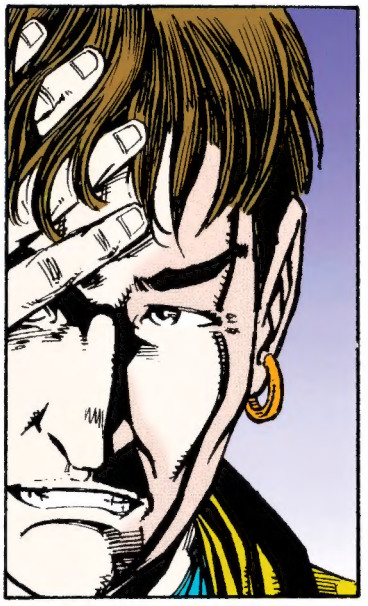
"RIKO FELL FOR THE RUSE AND WAS MORE THAN HAPPY TO INVITE ME INTO THE GANG..."

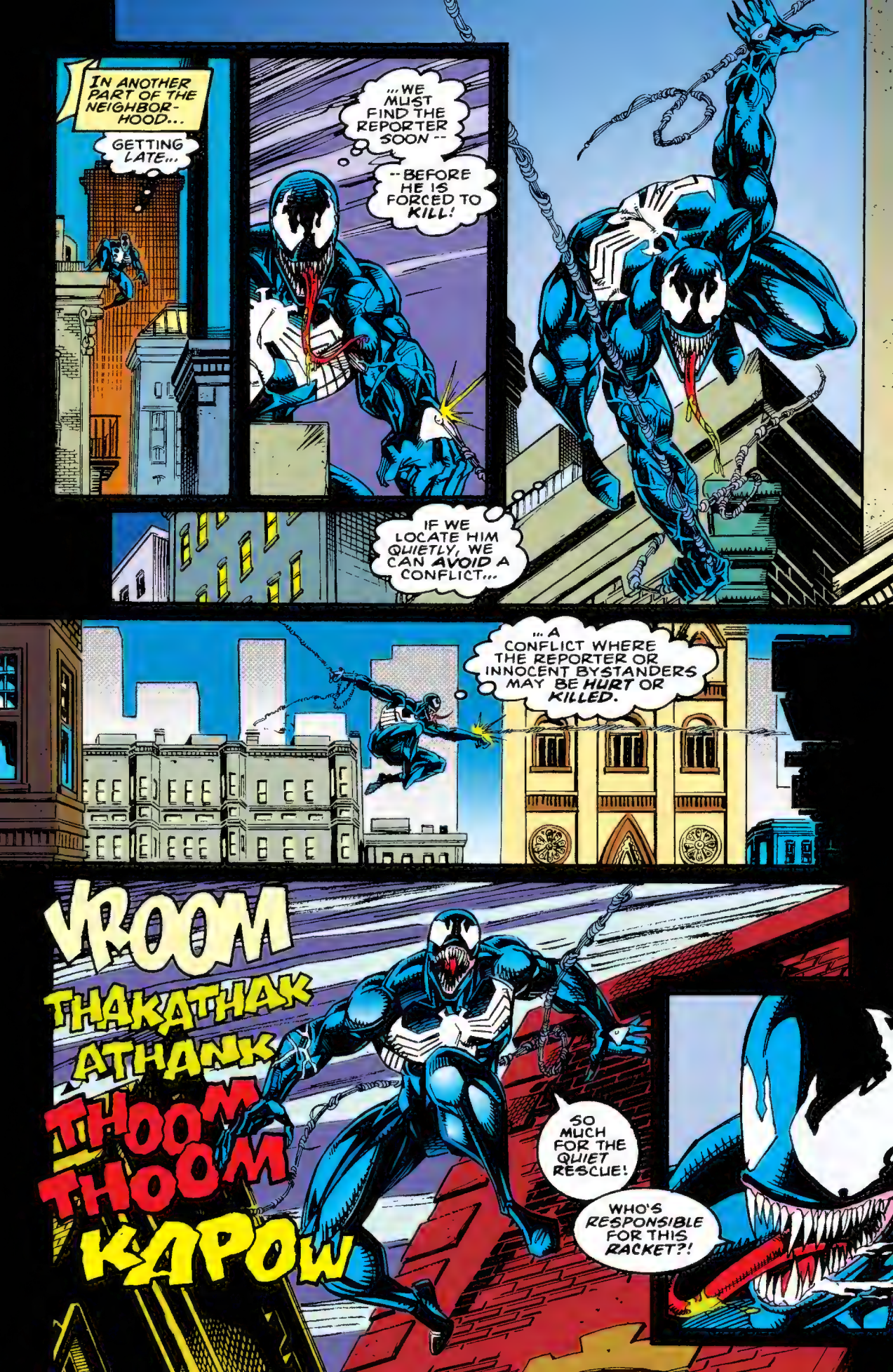
GRAY! HEY-- GRAY! SNAP OUT OF IT, MAN!
YOU IN OUTTA SPACE?!
SORRY. I'M JUST TIRED.
LISTEN, MAN. YOU ALMOST GOT ME IN BIG $#¢?! LAST NIGHT!
MMM

YOU KNOW I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU TILL YOU FINISH YOUR INITIATION. YOU S'POSED TO STAY WITH ME AT ALL TIMES.
WHEN WE WENT INTA THE BUILDING AFTA THE OL' MAN, YOU STAYED BEHIND ON THE STREET.
IF YOU TRIED TO SPLIT, I'D HAFTA NAIL YOUR HIDE OR THE GANG BE DEADIN' ME!
WHAT WERE YOU DOING WHILE WE WERE IN THE BUILDING, GRAY?


SOMEONE HAD TO COVER THE ENTRANCE 'CASE THE OLD MAN BACKTRACKED AND RAN OUT.
WHAT HAPPEN' TO THE LITTLE KID?
HE RUN OFF. I DIDN'T CHASE HIM 'CAUSE I KNEW YOU'D BE MAD IF I LEFT, OKAY?

OKAY, GRAY. STAY COOL.




IN ANOTHER PART OF THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD...
GETTING LATE...
...WE MUST FIND THE REPORTER SOON --
--BEFORE HE IS FORCED TO KILL!
IF WE LOCATE HIM QUIETLY, WE CAN AVOID A CONFLICT...
... A CONFLICT WHERE THE REPORTER OR INNOCENT BYSTANDERS MAY BE HURT OR KILLED.
VROOM
THAKATHAK
ATHANK
THOOM
THOOM
KAPOW
SO MUCH FOR THE QUIET RESCUE!
WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS RACKET?!

SEVERAL BLOCKS AWAY...
CHKA
CHK A
KPOW KPOW KPOW
This place is crawling with vermin.
BRAPP BRRPP
I can do a lot of good here.
They're taking off for that building.
Can't use the van's high explosives unless I'm sure there aren't any innocents inside.
BRRPP
BRAAAP BRAAP
Have to root them out on foot.

THE PUNISHER...
...SUBJECT OF MANY NEWSPAPER ARTICLES--
--A POSSIBLE KINDRED SPIRIT. CLAIMS TO BE A PROTECTOR OF INNOCENTS.
WE SHALL SEE.
PLIP
LET'S CHAT. TAKE A LOAD OFF.
HUNH?!
NOT MUCH FOR WORDS, EH? NOT TO WORRY -- WE CAN SPEAK FOR BOTH OF US. WE ARE VENOM.
WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME SIDE HERE. BUT YOU'RE BLOWING OUR QUIET LITTLE RESCUE --
--OF A FELLOW JOURNALIST UNDERCOVER IN A LOCAL GANG.
ANYONE RUNNING WITH A GANG IS NO INNOCENT. CAN'T HANG WITH A ROUGH CROWD UNLESS YOU PROVE YOURSELF IN BLOODY WAYS.
WE ARE TRYING TO SAVE AN INNOCENT. IT IS OUR MISSION IN LIFE, IS IT NOT?
MORE &#?!#, VENOM. YOU'VE SLAUGHTERED NUMEROUS INNOCENTS. WHAT ABOUT THE GUARDS AT THE VAULT?
YOU RATIONALIZE KILLING INNOCENTS TO SERVE YOUR OWN ENDS. YOU'RE A LUNATIC. WE HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON. NOW HAND OVER MY...
YOU CALL US INSANE? WE ARE THE TRUE PRO-TECTORS!
WE WILL PROTECT OUR CHARGE FROM YOU!

WOAHH!
BLAM BLAM
WUMP
THAT STINGS US... BUT WE SIMPLY SPIT IT OUT.
PLOOP PTOP
Ballistic knife is the only hope...
PLIP
YOU'RE FAST--
--BUT WE ARE FASTER!
...it can penetrate surfaces that stop most slugs.
PLIP
GOT YOU NOW.
URG!
SPLANG

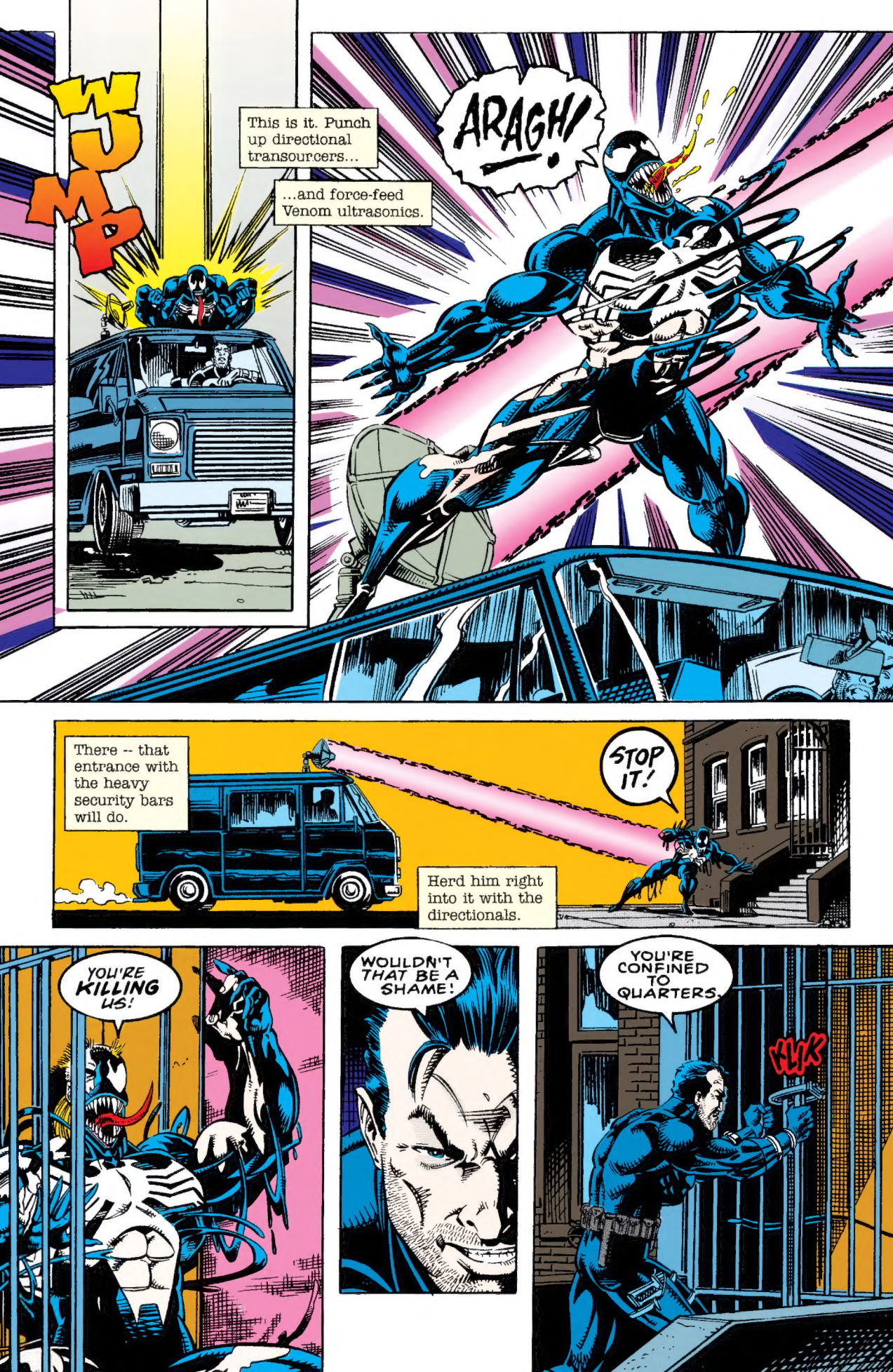
YOU HAD ONE SHOT AND YOU MISSED, PUNISHER.
WAK
WE'LL TAKE MANY SHOTS AND NEVER MISS...
KRAK
...WHAT? THE SUN HAS GONE DOWN!
WE WASTED TOO MUCH TIME HERE!
MUST SAVE THE REPORTER BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
KARESH
THE CONFUSION OF THE PUNISHER'S ASSAULT HAS SET OFF A GANG WAR!
EACH GANG MUST HAVE THOUGHT IT WAS UNDER ATTACK BY ONE OF ITS RIVALS.
HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND THE REPORTER IN THIS CHAOS?
IS HE ALREADY DEAD?
WE MUST NOT FAIL IN OUR MISSION!

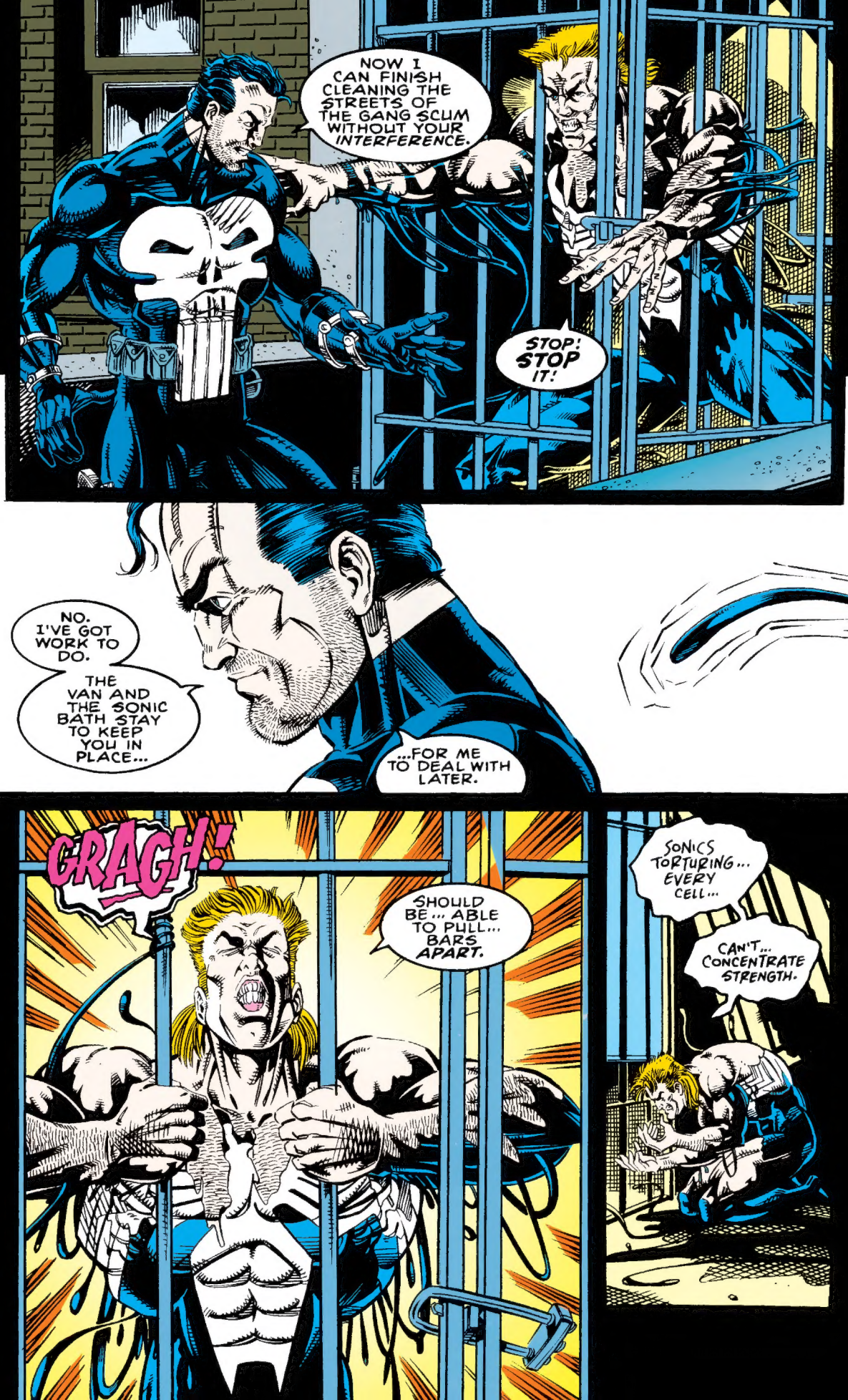
NOT FAR AWAY...
Head spinning... have to get... to ... van ...
LOOK! IT'S THE PUNISHER! HE LOOKS HURT BAD!
I'M GONE DEAD THAT MOTHER!
Entry code -- there. It's open.
Punch up the auto-defense systems...
...while I repair some damage and do a computer search for Venom...
BLAST HIM OUTTA THERE!
...find out just what I'm dealing with.
SYSTEMS ENGAGED: SONIC PAIN FIELD GENERATORS -- STING BALLS-- CHAIN GUN -- RESULT: ALL HOSTILES NEUTRALIZED
THAKA THAKA THAKA
Venom is tough. Very tough.
Only two possible chinks in his armor, according to the files...
...sonics and fire.
VROOM

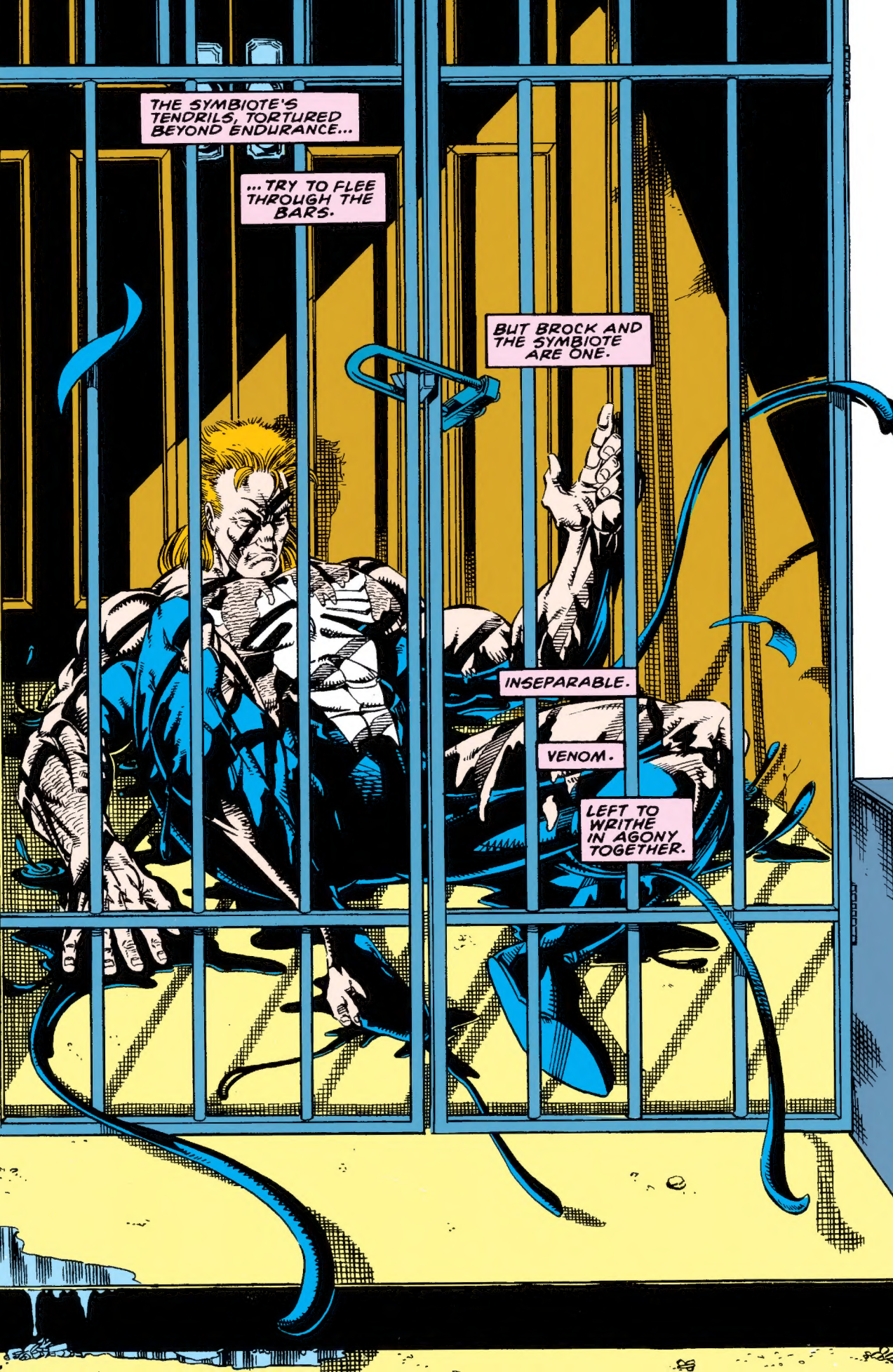
MEANWHILE...
THIS IS TURNING INTO A WAR! GOT TO MAKE MYSELF SCARCE...
WE GOT THE CORLISS GANG HITTING US FROM THE NORTH AND THE BLADES IN THE EAST.
KICK IT! WE'LL WIPE 'EM ALL!
WE GONNA DRILL THEIR STOOPIT HEADS!
... LOSE MYSELF IN THE INTERIOR OF THIS HUGE PLACE.
THEY'RE SO BUSY, MAYBE THEY WON'T NOTICE.
BEEN LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THE SITE... DAD SAID THE HIDDEN ENTRANCE TO THE MAIN LABS WAS HIDDEN SOMEWHERE AROUND--
CLIK
HOLY--
THIS MUST BE THE HYDRA SUPER SOLDIER LAB. DAD SAID IT WAS ABANDONED RIGHT BEFORE THEY WERE TO TEST IT ON A HUMAN SUBJECT!
WILD. THE COMPUTERS ARE STILL ON AND READY TO PROCEED!

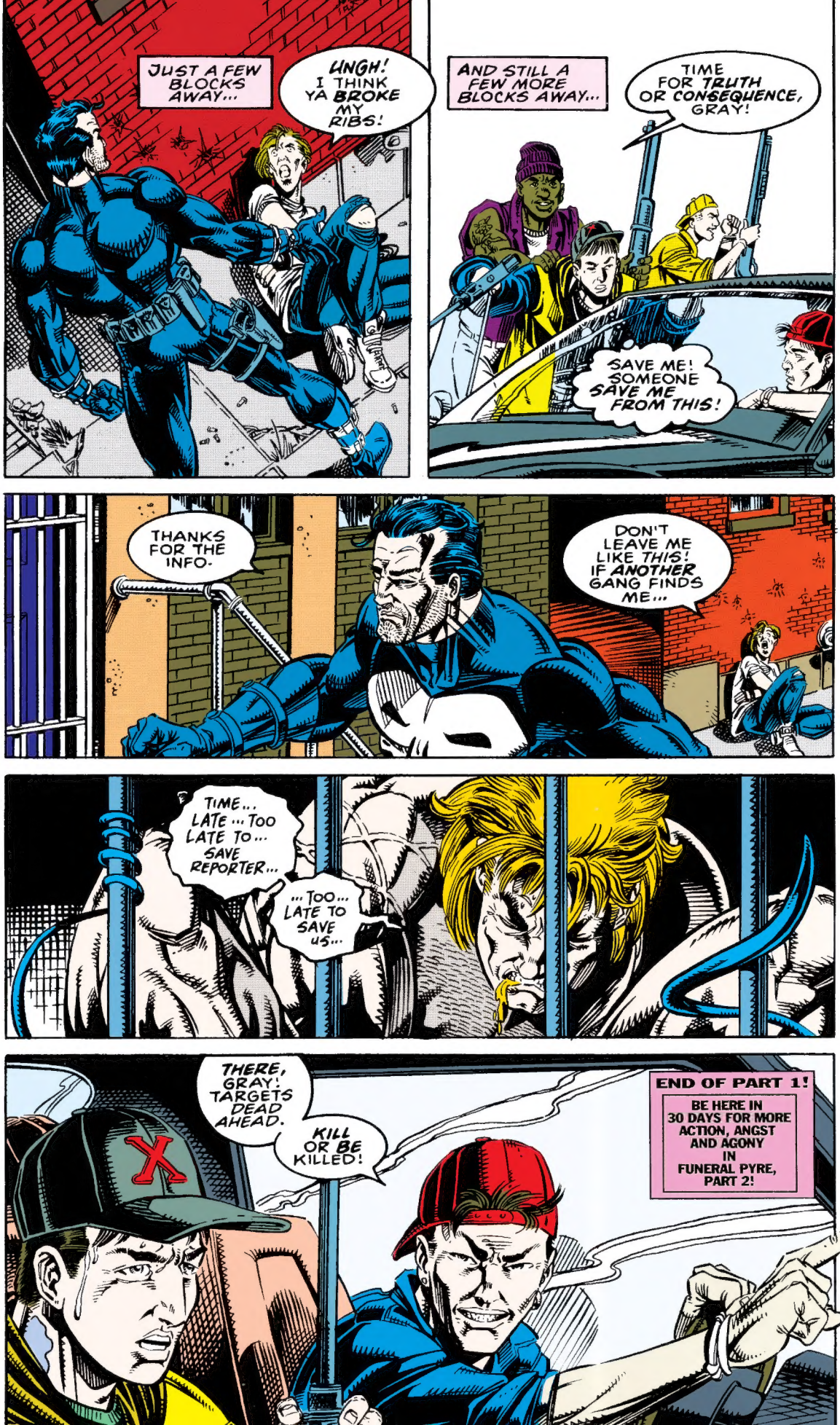
THIS WHOLE LAB IS READY TO TURN OUT...
GRAY! LET'S GO, MAN! WE BE STUPID LATE FOR THIS WAR!
GEEZ, MAN -- NEVER BEEN IN HERE BEFORE...
... WHAT IS THIS STUFF?
NOT SURE, RIKO. HEARD SOME STRANGE NOISES THROUGH THE WALL AND FOUND A HIDDEN DOOR.
NEVER MIND -- WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS EXPLORIN' #$!¢ NOW-- HERE!
IT'S TIME TO SHOOT!
COME ON!

There's the psycho.
Hope the research was correct.
WHAT? THAT VAN?!
YES, IT IS HIM!
HE'S VERY TOUGH...
...VERY PERSISTENT...
...AND SOON TO BE VERY DEAD!


WJMP
This is it. Punch up directional transourcers...
...and force-feed Venom ultrasonics.
ARAGH!
There -- that entrance with the heavy security bars will do.
STOP IT!
Herd him right into it with the directionals.
YOU'RE KILLING US!
WOULDN'T THAT BE A SHAME!
YOU'RE CONFINED TO QUARTERS.
KLIK


NOW I CAN FINISH CLEANING THE STREETS OF THE GANG SCUM WITHOUT YOUR INTERFERENCE.
STOP! STOP IT!
NO. I'VE GOT WORK TO DO.
THE VAN AND THE SONIC BATH STAY TO KEEP YOU IN PLACE...
...FOR ME TO DEAL WITH LATER.
GRAGH!
SHOULD BE... ABLE TO PULL... BARS APART.
SONICS TORTURING... EVERY CELL...
CAN'T... CONCENTRATE STRENGTH.


THE SYMBIOTE'S TENDRILS, TORTURED BEYOND ENDURANCE...
...TRY TO FLEE THROUGH THE BARS.
BUT BROCK AND THE SYMBIOTE ARE ONE.
INSEPARABLE.
VENOM.
LEFT TO WRITHE IN AGONY TOGETHER.


JUST A FEW BLOCKS AWAY...
UNGH! I THINK YA BROKE MY RIBS!
AND STILL A FEW MORE BLOCKS AWAY...
TIME FOR TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCE, GRAY!
SAVE ME! SOMEONE SAVE ME FROM THIS!
THANKS FOR THE INFO.
DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS! IF ANOTHER GANG FINDS ME...
TIME... LATE... TOO LATE TO... SAVE REPORTER...
...TOO... LATE TO SAVE US...
THERE, GRAY! TARGETS DEAD AHEAD.
KILL OR BE KILLED!
END OF PART 1!
BE HERE IN 30 DAYS FOR MORE ACTION, ANGST AND AGONY IN FUNERAL PYRE, PART 2!